



# PRESS RELEASE

## House National Security Committee

### Floyd D. Spence, Chairman

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### SPENCE BLASTS ADMINISTRATION'S MANAGEMENT OF NUCLEAR STOCKPILE

*Chairman of the House National Security Committee, Floyd D. Spence (R-SC), today released a report, "The Clinton Administration and Stockpile Stewardship: Erosion by Design", that is highly critical of the Clinton Administration for not taking the necessary steps to ensure the safety and reliability of the nuclear stockpile and long-term viability of the U.S. nuclear deterrent. Today's report represents a comprehensive update of a report on the same topic released by Spence in September 1993. Upon release of today's report, Chairman Spence issued the following statement:*

"The past four years have witnessed the dramatic decline of the U.S. nuclear weapons complex and the uniquely skilled workforce that is responsible for maintaining our nuclear deterrent. The Administration's laissez-faire approach to stewardship of the nuclear stockpile, within the broader context of its support for a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, is clearly threatening the nation's long-term ability to maintain a safe and reliable nuclear stockpile. Maintaining the safety and reliability of U.S. nuclear weapons in the absence of nuclear testing poses serious technical and technological challenges—and may even prove to be a 'mission impossible'.

Despite the Administration's rhetorical commitment to take all the necessary steps to maintain the nation's nuclear deterrent in the absence of nuclear testing, the Administration's actions—or in this case, inactions—speak much louder than its words. There is simply too much disturbing evidence that the Administration has failed, time and time again, to provide focused management attention and resources to the nuclear stewardship mission. In my mind, it's no longer a question of the Administration's 'benign neglect' of our nation's nuclear forces, but instead, a compelling case can be made that it is a matter of 'erosion by design.'

"I fully expect that this report will bolster the case of those who advocate the Department of Energy be abolished and its missions transferred to the Department of Defense and elsewhere."

The report contains the following conclusions:

- ***The international security environment remains risky and uncertain as serious threats still challenge the United States and its interests.*** Growing concerns over the command and control of Russia's nuclear forces, the technical ability of renegade Russian military elements to launch a missile attack

independent of the political leadership, an increasingly revanchist attitude in Moscow, and a new military doctrine that places greater emphasis on nuclear weapons highlight the importance of maintaining a robust and reliable U.S. nuclear deterrent. Likewise, China's ambitious program of nuclear modernization and the growing proliferation of strategic weapons technologies and capabilities around the world pose a serious threat to the United States;

- ***The Clinton Administration's Stockpile Stewardship and Management Program (SSMP) entails significant technological risks and uncertainties.*** Certification that U.S. nuclear weapons are safe and reliable—in the context of a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT)—depends upon developing highly advanced scientific diagnostic tools that do not yet exist and may not work as advertised. Funding shortfalls, legal challenges, and other problems are almost certain to continue to impede progress in achieving the program's ambitious goals, and raise serious doubts about the ability of the program to serve as an effective substitute for nuclear testing. The Administration's commitment to implementing the SSMP and, more broadly, to maintaining the U.S. nuclear stockpile is called into question by DOE's failure to adequately fund the SSMP and to conduct important experiments;
- ***The Administration has failed to perform standard non-nuclear flight tests, non-nuclear system tests, and laboratory tests of nuclear and non-nuclear components that are necessary to assure weapons safety and reliability.*** Moreover, the Department of Defense (DOD) and DOE are significantly behind schedule in carrying out certain activities to help detect and diagnose weapons aging-related problems. According to the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO), shortfalls in testing of nuclear weapons are a direct result of the Administration's restructuring of the U.S. nuclear weapons complex;
- ***Unprecedented reductions and disruptive reorganizations in the nuclear weapons scientific and industrial base have compromised the ability to maintain a safe and reliable nuclear stockpile.*** The cessation of nuclear-related production and manufacturing activities has resulted in the loss of thousands of jobs and critical capabilities. Essential recapitalization has been deferred. DOE still lacks concrete plans for resuming the production of tritium, a critical element not only for new nuclear warheads, but also for replenishment of the active inventory. Unlike Russia or China, the United States no longer retains the capacity for large-scale plutonium "pit" production and DOE's plans to reconstitute such a capacity may be inadequate;
- ***The downsizing of DOE facilities and associated personnel reductions have created a serious deficiency in the nuclear work force.*** The sacrificing of uniquely talented people is perhaps the most injurious consequence of the Administration's stockpile stewardship policies;
- ***The Administration has given higher priority to concluding a CTBT than to maintaining the nuclear testing regime that ensured the safety and reliability of the U.S. nuclear stockpile over the past fifty years.*** As North Korea, Pakistan, Israel, and South Africa have demonstrated by developing nuclear weapons without testing, the CTBT will not inhibit nuclear proliferation and cannot be effectively verified. Moreover, although the President formally conditioned U.S. acceptance of a CTBT on a series of safeguards, the Administration has failed to act when faced with events that should have triggered those safeguards.

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